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SUBJECT: MCA: MOROCCO HOLDS NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

11. (SBU) Summary. On March 28-29, the GOM hosted a national consultative workshop with NGOs, local associations, academics, private sector representatives and members of the international donor community as part of its consultation process for developing a compact proposal to access funds from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). While hastily organized and not always following its original schedule, the event allowed a large portion of civil society the opportunity to express their concerns regarding the various factors that affect poverty reduction in Morocco and their opinions of how to use MCA funding to address these problems.

The GOM speakers noted that it would hold regional meetings in the future to broaden the consultative process. Few participants seemed to notice that there was little time for this unless the GOM significantly delays the submission of its compact proposal, currently scheduled for April 15, but likely to slip. Most participants appeared less concerned/familiar with internal MCA procedures and focused more on the magnitude of the MCA program and the fact that the GOM had asked them for their opinion. End summary.

12. (U) In an effort to meet the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) request for broad, national consultations with Moroccan stakeholders, the GOM invited approximately 475 representatives from every region of Morocco to a consultative session in Ouarzazate March 28-29. Organizers told econoff that 98-99 percent of those invited had attended. The GOM chartered two Boeing 767s to transport the invitees from Casablanca to the desert town of Ouarzazate and paid for their accommodations.

13. (U) The GOM's Joint National Workshop was originally planned for March 25-26, but was rescheduled to March 28-29 approximately one week before. The night before the hastily organized event, participants received a nine page summary covering the basics of the MCA program, the GOM's current compact proposal, and King Mohammed VI's National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), which served as the basis for the GOM's original MCA proposal. While the summary was informative, most participants appeared to have only an elementary understanding of the MCA program.

14. (U) Opening statements by Prime Minister Driss Jettou and the Ministry of Finance's Director of Studies and Financial Planning Mohamed Chafiki helped inform the audience of the GOM's proposal to use MCA funds to address agriculture, oases (and related water issues) and the INDH. The GOM hoped that members of the audience would select spokespersons to address the issues that affect them, but with such a large audience and no opportunity for audience members to organize among themselves, this proved impossible. As a result, there was momentary disorder as a large number of participants insisted

on addressing their issues directly to the audience.

15. (SBU) On the positive side, participants demonstrated great interest in the program and a determination to be heard by the GOM and included in the consultative process. However, the large number of speakers necessitated changing the schedule of the conference and took potential time away from an actual discussion of the problems. As a result, well over 100 people briefly addressed the audience on the first day of the conference. While some of the speakers made clear and impassioned pleas for their causes, numerous others were simply rambling, redundant and time consuming. The proceedings finally ended at 8:00 PM with a surprisingly positive mood because a large number of people were able to tell the GOM about their problems. This alone probably validates the MCC's claim that the GOM needed to expand its consultative process. Many participants told econoff they were pleased with the meeting because it was the first time the GOM had ever consulted them on the problems confronting their communities.

16. (SBU) Early on the first day, the moderator of the conference organized two teams of rapporteurs to take notes and accept written studies from the participants as the basis for a two-hour discussion period on the second day of the conference and for a final report on the findings of the meeting. A report of the proceedings that should be available by mid-April could be helpful for future meetings in the consultation process and the next compact proposal. However, a tight schedule still exists to incorporate the results of this meeting, and subsequent ones, into the GOM's next MCA compact proposal, given the GOM interest in rapid progress on the compact.

17. (SBU) The second day of the proceedings concluded after
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only 42 minutes. The planned two-hour discussion of the lessons of the first day was reduced to a 10 minute summary of key points. Interestingly, the first lesson learned that the moderator noted was that civil society was not sufficiently involved in the consultative process. The second issue mentioned was a lack of coordination between civil society organizations and their failure to sufficiently monitor the results of their programs. Of the other approximately 50 issues raised, some of the more prominent included improving the infrastructure of water resources, rationalizing land ownership, promoting micro credit lending, fighting illiteracy, increasing agricultural production and food processing, assisting the fishing industry and promoting traditional artisans. Surprisingly, only one speaker on the first day suggested that legislative changes would be necessary to help assure the success of potential GOM programs.

18. (SBU) Comment. For the most part, the participants of the GOM's Joint National Workshop left the meeting happy that they had been asked for their opinions on the problems confronting Morocco. The meeting failed to produce in-depth discussions of the problems. However, it allowed many Moroccans to voice their questions and problems directly to the GOM for the first time. Regional consultation meetings were scheduled to start in early April and the participants clearly heard the message that this conference was the beginning of the consultative process, not the end. Although time is very short before the GOM submits its next compact proposal, this meeting may represent an important early step in the growing participation of Moroccan civil society in formulating public policy.

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